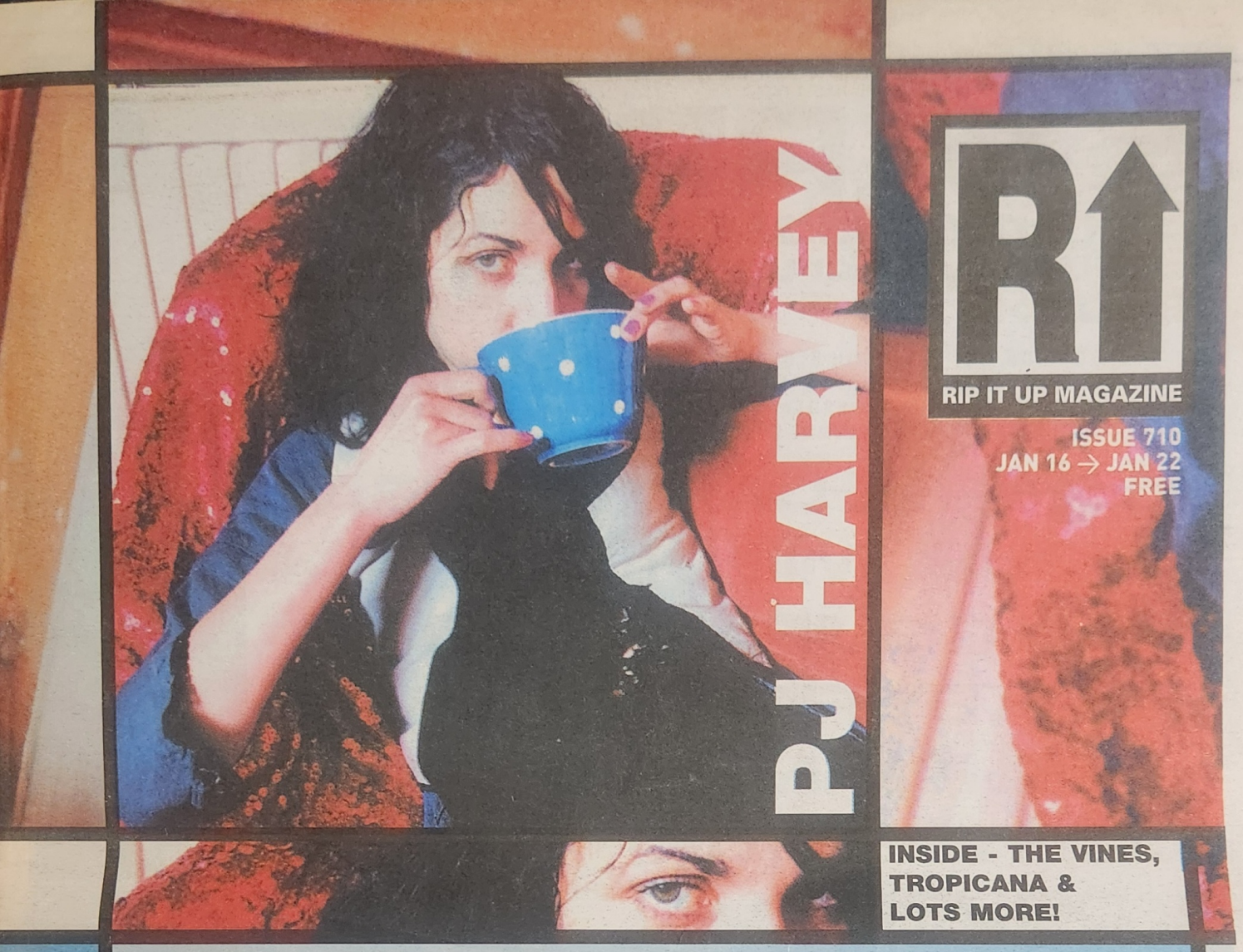

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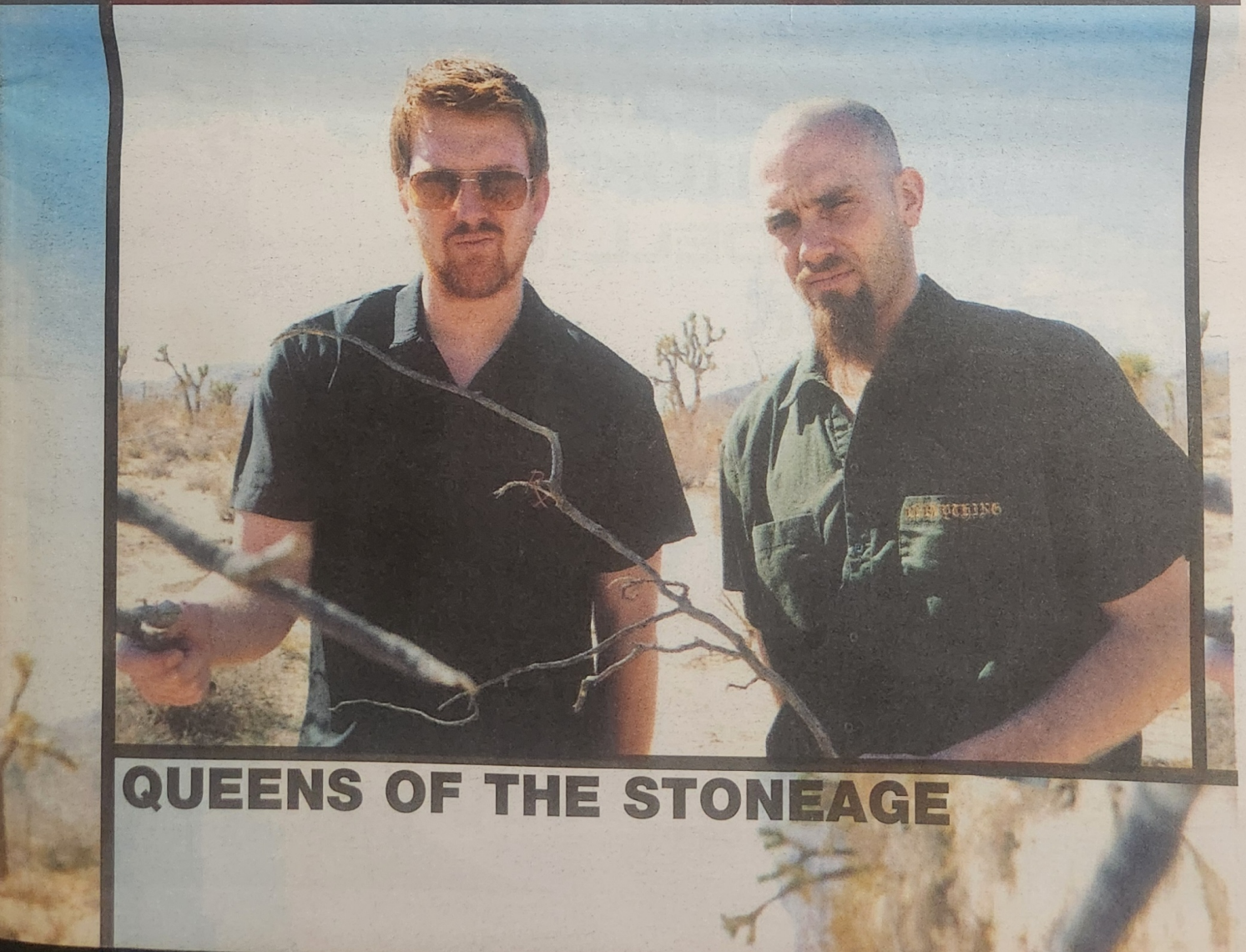

QUEENS OF THE STONEAGE

The Vines

Coming Home → by Shane Robert Cooper

It's been a whirlwind of UK chart hits, US talk shows and *NME* raves since Australian band The Vines became rock's next big thing. Cameras flash and critics gush while celebrities clamour to be best buddies. It all seems so glamorous and fabulous but what's it really like being in The Vines?

It is mid-December and the band - Patrick Matthews, Craig Nicholls, Hamish Rosser and Ryan Griffiths - are freezing their collective butts off in Boston, USA, where folk are experiencing record lows in temperature. Jetlag ensures The Vines struggle with fatigue thanks to out of sync body clocks as they complete their current US tour. Welcome to the flipside of MTV.

Although he says he isn't as homesick as he has been in the past, Patrick admits everyone is looking forward to enjoying a sultry Australian summer.

"I'm ready to leave but there's no point in getting silly about it because we're almost home. How do I cope? I utilise alcohol to get me through. I know it sounds pretty bad but I think it's what most bands do - y'know, get drunk before falling to sleep. I don't know what I'd do if I didn't have a beer most nights.

"Having said that, we were never what I'd consider to be rock'n'rollers in the Mötley Crüe sense of the term. I'm looking forward to a quiet time at home and drinking lots of cups of tea."

In addition to consuming copious amounts of Earl Grey, The Vines also plan to headline gigs in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane as well as pop their cherry on their first Big Day Out duties. The Vines will undoubtedly be a crowd favourite with a brilliant but brisk set (after all, this is the band that reignited the art of the three-minute song). Refreshingly, the band's debut album, *Highly Evolved*, has justified the hype with a lasting collection of tight highlights that go down a treat on stage.

Although life on the road can have its advantages (room service, frequent flyer points, duty free alcohol) Patrick admits there are times he misses his old life.

"Yeah, touring can be a lot of fun but it's also fairly repetitive. I know you shouldn't complain too much because you'd never get the chance to play in front of thousands of people except if you went on tour and live this life.

"In terms of making music, however, it's actually an impediment because you tire musically - it's difficult to get inspired about music while on the road. It's much easier when you're living the quiet life at home. It's not like it's screwing with my head too much but I'm quite sure I'm right in saying we'll achieve more musically when we get home. Maintaining our integrity is more important to us than having celebrity friends. We just want to continuing writing good songs."

Thankfully, there is little chance of songs on the new album bemoaning the cons of touring. Counting the likes of David Bowie and Ryan Adams as fans ("Ryan told us he didn't take our album out of his player for a week," Patrick laughed.) The Vines (seemingly) shot straight from their garages to greatness in less than a year. In the early days, did Patrick and the boys ever dare to dream of such a quick route to fame and fortune?

"While we were making *Highly Evolved*, it was clear it was working out to our immense satisfaction," he recalled. "It was exactly what we wanted to make - an album that people were going to enjoy. We've even had hip hop fans come up to us to say how much they've enjoyed our songs, so we knew the success of *Highly Evolved* wasn't going to depend on all of us wearing black or anything. We knew it was going to be successful because it appealed to a lot of disparate individuals."

Still, the extent of the band's success continues to bemuse Patrick as The Vines prepare to pack suitcases for a long flight home.

"The way we have taken off in America has especially surprised us because we're getting to the point where we're considered a mainstream band here, which is strange. At this point, we've probably sold five times as many records in the US than the UK because it's a much bigger territory, but I'd say our UK fans tend to know all the words to our songs and are more interested in what Craig's words have to say than what his hair is doing.

"It's different again in Australia because people don't ask us for autographs. I don't know how recognisable our faces are now, but I guess we'll soon find out," he concluded.

"We've even had hip hop fans come up to us to say how much they've enjoyed our songs, so we knew the success of Highly Evolved wasn't going to depend on all of us wearing black or anything."

The Vines play The Big Day Out 2003 at Royal Adelaide Showgrounds, Wayville, on *Fri Jan 31* along with Foo Fighters (US), Janes Addiction (US), Queens Of The Stone Age (US), Deftones (US), PJ Harvey (UK), Millencolin (Sweden), Sparta (US), Jimmy Eat World (US), Murderdolls (US), The Music (UK), Gonzales (US), Wilco (US), Chicks On Speed (Germany), Kraftwerk (Germany), Luke Slater, The Living End, The Hard Ons, Pacifier, Cog, Waikiki, Augie March, Frenzal Rhomb, The Waifs, Jebediah, Machine Gun Fellatio, Resin Dogs, Kid Kenobi, Rocket Science, 28 Days, 1200 Techniques, The Vines, TESTEAGLES, The New Pollutant DJs, Circle Clan, Unprovoked Attack, Your Motive For and more. Check out <www.bigdayout.com.au> for more details.